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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED.

MUSIC.

"HANDEL was a good old pagan at heart, and until he had to yield to the fashionable piety of England stuck to the opera and cantatas, where he could revel and plunge and frolic without being tied down to orthodoxy." This excerpt from the letters of Edward Fitzgerald sounds the key-note of this new and wholly delightful life of Handel.* "It is as a poet, a sympathizer with and renderer of all estates and conditions, whether of men or things, rather than as a mere musician, that Handel reigns supreme," the author quotes further from Samuel Butler.

Yes; this biography is not so much a volume of musical criticism, though that is not lacking, as it is a delightful picture of the times and the record of the gigantic struggles, the many failures and final victory of that brave, great-hearted human giant Handel. The author throughout relates his subject to the world in which he lived and what a lively, moving, multicolored world that was—the London of the first half of the eighteenth century. What a mass of records there are to draw from, the memoirs and correspondence of Arbuthnot, Gay, Prior, Pope, Walpole; the letters of the Duchess of Marlborough, Lady Cowper, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Fannie Burney and Mrs. Delany. Dodding-ton's Diary and Fielding's novels (see *Amelia* Bk., IV, chap. VII) also furnish descriptions and data of the operatic feuds in which Handel took so lively a part and held his own in so stout and Teutonic a way.

The very method of composing which the author conscientiously lays bare for us shows us the stout old pagan's light-hearted attitude toward creeds and forms. Good music, he contended, was always good, no matter where you used it, and he used a lament

* "Handel." By R. A. Streatfield. New York: John Lane Company, 1909.

sung by a believer over the crucified Christ as a love-song for Ahasuerus, while the duet sung by Esther and her king when she is reassured is the same as that sung by the Blessed Virgin and Christ in His last moments. Stranger yet, the strains in which Haman pleads for his life with Esther are bodily taken from Christ's agony in Gethsemane. The Virgin's lullaby is used later as Pleasure's enticement of Hercules. Sacred music, to Handel, was merely an artistic exercise, and while "Bach is on his knees in the Holy of Holies, Handel marches leading a gayly robed procession down the echoing aisles of the church." In religious, as in secular music, he had an eye for the motley, earthly pageant, and he loved God chiefly and praised Him most devoutly for this lovely earth of sight and sounds.

The author has succeeded delightfully in finding the man Handel not only in the records of the day, but in his music, tracing his character, his view of life, his thoughts, feelings and aspirations as they are set down in his work.

To the same series as the life of Handel belongs the scholarly and delightful life of Hugo Wolf* by Ernest Newman himself. In recent years the original and scholarly musical compositions of Hugo Wolf have led many lovers of true music to a desire to know Wolf more fully and intimately, and to have an insight into the environment and conditions amidst which he gave to the world songs which will go down the ages as classics and operas which will always be of interest to the student of music, although they have not yet been given public performance. Dr. Ernst Decsey has written a most complete biography in four volumes of Wolf, and only recently several smaller works dealing with his compositions and his life have been published. Most of the foregoing, however, are German publications and, therefore, not accessible to many lovers and followers of music in this country. It has remained for Mr. Ernest Newman, one of the very best of our latter-day critics, to write a truly charming and, to a great extent, intimate life of Hugo Wolf. Mr. Newman's book is in two parts, dealing respectively with Wolf's life and his works. It also contains a complete list of Wolf's published compositions.

* "Hugo Wolf." By Ernest Newman. New York: John Lane Company, 1909.